

Sore Throat

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS

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Viral sore throat

Sore throats are usually caused by viruses and they sometimes accompany a cold. Antibiotics do not work against viruses and can be harmful if taken when not needed. You can usually treat a viral sore throat yourself. It should get better in 2-3 days. See the box below for self-care advice.

Strep throat

Strep throat is a sore throat caused by streptococcal bacteria. It is more common in children aged 3 to 14 and is treated with antibiotics to prevent rheumatic fever. Your doctor may decide to do a throat swab in order to confirm strep before prescribing antibiotics. If you or your child are prescribed antibiotics, take all your pills exactly as instructed by your doctor.

General Treatment for Relief of Sore Throat (Viral and Strep)

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids (juice, water, weak tea with honey and lemon)
- Eat soft and bland foods
- Gargle frequently with warm salt water (5 ml in a half-litre [1 teaspoon in 2 cups] of water)
- Stop smoking and avoid others' smoke
- If necessary for pain or fever, take aspirin or acetaminophen (Do not give aspirin to children or teens under 20)
- Throat lozenges may help (Do not give lozenges to children under 5)
- Increase room humidity (e.g., use a humidifier or vaporizer)